

Medicaid expansion has two dimensions

Posted: Monday, April 7, 2014 11:04 am

To the editor: What have our legislators come to when they care more about parks than they care about 300,000 working Missourians who cannot afford Medicaid or coverage under the Affordable Care Act (ACA)?

Last week members of the House set aside money in the next budget to take over administration of a national park, and again refused to expand Medicaid. (Quill, 3/26/14)

The dubious arguments for their refusal were a transparent disguise for their real motive -- attempting to block success of the ACA. Their intent was made clear early on when they prohibited any state agency from providing information to Missourians who wanted to learn more about the provisions of the act. Attempting to influence people by enforced ignorance should be repugnant to any believer in democratic government regardless of their political views.

Medicaid expansion has two dimensions. Morally it is the "right" action. It will enable 300,000 Missourians to obtain health insurance. It is puzzling that more of the good people in this area do not speak out about the lack of compassion that our legislators continue to show.

From an economic standpoint, expanding Medicaid would benefit Missouri in a number of ways. The federal government will pay 100 percent of the cost of expansion for the next two years, and at least 90 percent thereafter indefinitely. The influx of federal dollars would save 15,000 lives, create 24,000 jobs (MCHFA), and ease the burden on hospitals which will

lose some federal support if their state does not expand Medicaid. (www.stltoday.com, 1/3/14) Linda Leubbing, Missouri budget director, indicated that even when Missouri is required to pay 10 percent of the cost of Medicaid expansion, there will be a net benefit to Missouri of four million dollars in 2021. (KSMU news, 2/24/14)

Since January 1, 2014, we have paid 500 million dollars in federal taxes, or 500 dollars for every Missourian, for other states to pay for their Medicaid expansion. (Governor Nixon, 4/2/14, West Plains) We could better use this money to benefit Missouri instead.

You can do something to encourage Medicaid expansion in Missouri. Telephone number, 800 980-4407, will connect you directly to Senator Cunningham's office. You can call Representative Shawn Rhoads at 573 751-1455. Urge them to expand Medicaid. It is the right thing to do morally and practically. While you're at it, encourage friends and relatives to call too.

Dan Leary

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